

16 April 1985

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 30

'Sandinistas Are Following Castro's Path'

Excerpts from recent statements on Nicaragua. A related editorial appears today:

Jim Hampton, editor of the Miami Herald, in an April 7 column:

Eight months ago I wouldn't have dreamed of suggesting that Congress give the *contras* a dime. Eight months ago it still seemed possible that the Sandinistas would make their November 1984 elections open, meaningful, pluralistic. That prospect died a-borning, however. The elections—like most of the Sandinistas' other early promises of representative government—proved to be mere sham.

Within the past eight months, in short, I have slowly been changing my views. . . . Indeed, our entire Editorial Board has been going through the same reappraisal, not at my direction but spontaneously.

Three weeks ago, I went to Nicaragua, hoping to discover whether my impressions from afar held true close up. They did. I wish they hadn't; that would have been far less disquieting than having them confirmed. Those impressions now are hardening into convictions. . . .

• The Sandinistas are following the path that Fidel Castro trod after leading Cuba's revolution 25 years ago. If their tracing of his footsteps continues, Nicaragua will become the second full-fledged Communist state at America's doorstep.

• It is imperative that the United States thwart that progression. If peaceable means will suffice, then by all means every avenue of negotiation and conciliation should—must—be pursued.

• If peaceable means fail, then armed conflict involving U.S. forces is all but inevitable unless the United States resigns itself to abandoning the Monroe Doctrine, not to say its own national security. . . .

That eventuality can be avoided only if the Sandinistas open themselves to negotiations with their internal opposition. They're far likelier to do that if they face a United States whose President and Congress embrace one rational policy toward Nicaragua. That unity in turn will coalesce only if that policy, whatever it proves to be, has the American people's support.

Mr. Reagan's proposed peace talks don't yet qualify as a policy, but they are a welcome and positive alternative to further intransigent saber-rattling. Nor has Congress put forth its own, better alternative. Because it hasn't, Congress should treat Mr. Reagan's proposal not as a dirty trick but as a possible way to prevent a dirty guerrilla war from becoming still dirtier.

* * *

Claude Pepper, U.S. Representative:
Dear Mr. President:

I strongly share your objective that we preserve the principles of the Monroe Doctrine and prevent . . . communism or any form of government alien to our Western Hemisphere traditions of freedom and democracy in the Western Hemisphere.

I respectfully suggest that you . . . vigorously seek actions by the Organization of American States that would provide for a full range of effective measures.

The government of National Reconstruction of Nicaragua [the Sandinista Group] has failed to keep solemn promises, made to the OAS in July 1979, to establish full respect for human rights and political liberties, hold early elections . . . and permit political pluralism. . . . By providing military support to groups seeking to overthrow the government of El Salvador, . . . [it] has violated article 18 of the charter of the OAS.

The government of Nicaragua should be held accountable. . . . I believe if you would pursue the course recommended by Congress [in a 1983 law urging action in concert with the OAS states] . . . you would have the strong and hearty support of the Congress. . . .

If we fail in this effort to operate with and through the OAS, . . . we have no recourse to preserve democracy . . . except individual action: . . . breaking off recognition of Nicaragua, boycott, blockade or whatever else we might think the situation requires.

* * *

David Durenberger, U.S. Senator:

Today no repressive government can remain in power in Central America unless it receives outside support. But equally, no democratic movement can flourish in Central America unless it receives outside support. . . . When I first went to Central America 12 years ago, only Costa Rica had a functioning democracy. Today, Costa Rica is not alone. Panama, Honduras and El Salvador have democratically elected civilian governments that have made major progress in eliminating a legacy of injustice, economic stagnation and the arbitrary exercise of power. Even in Guatemala, a country which for years stood apart because of its feudal brutality, there are clear signs of progress. . . .

In every country but one, the democratic revolution is being carried out, however precariously. That country is Nicaragua. . . .

We are not demonstrably undertaking a significant, long-term and supportable policy which will define the U.S. role in Central America for the future. . . .

Clearly, it is not the obligation of Congress to develop such a policy. That is the responsibility of the Executive Branch. . . . But unless a genuine policy is developed—soon and well—the executive will leave itself open to defeat by a Congress which will begin to impose artificial restraints on this country. We cannot afford the kaleidoscopic micro-management of the Clark Amendment, the artificial box-checking exercise of human-rights certification, or the fencing of funding which was appropriated for the CIA. . . .

Our policy must have the element of credibility which comes from an evident willingness to undertake difficult, and potentially expensive actions. Without credibility, our actions raise doubts and questions. . . . We claim to support the democratic opposition in Nicaragua. If so, people must ask, where is the tangible sign of that support? If we oppose the regime in Managua, why do we buy Nicaraguan beef and bananas when Honduras could use our trade? And if we truly feel that the Sandinistas have lost their legitimacy because of their failure to adhere to the conditions for their recognition by the OAS, why do we continue diplomatic relations. . . . ?

If the Sandinistas adjust their policies . . . we should be willing to develop close and supportive ties. But we should also be prepared to isolate Nicaragua if the Sandinistas continue on a collision course with their neighbors.